Introduction

75 mi. is a long time for anything --
sermons 20
lectures 50 -

Speech writer joke - CEO, good S. writer, thought like - CEO not nice, mean - but trusted, didn't even read email
from for ~~CEO to~~ S. writer - to retire
one last effort - Imp Interesting Mtg - Genius

set scene -
10 most pressing problems - analyzed
- the way forward for their resolution

- OK - you various, arrogant SOB, you're on your own -

Hail Mary, Full of Grace - A Protestant View

let's begin ponderously - w/ Rosemary Radford Ruether's review - in a journal of Mary, The Feminine Side of the Church - & put her in a context

lightly - w/ a fanatic of mine - w/ an important reference to our topic

there is no official view -, in point of fact - ~~RC~~ RC has virtual monopoly on Mary - only time she enters Prot. tradition is at end - & at beginning - & there ambivalently - so - a kind-hearted

A Protestant View of Mary
Ladies Theology of Paul Ridge 11-30-88
Theology North 2-22-89

HAIL MARY

[redacted] Worship Service

John M. Buchanan

Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago

Scripture
Luke 1:26-33

"And the angel came to her and said, 'Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!'" —Luke 1:28 (RSV)

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever is a delightful book about some children and their Sunday School Christmas pageant and it is about the Herdmans, who the author describes as "the absolutely worst kids in the history of the world. They lied and stole and smoked cigars (even the girls) and talked dirty and hit little kids and cussed their teachers and took the name of the Lord in vain." [Barbara Robinson, p. 1]

The horrible Herdmans have decided to be in the Christmas pageant, but they don't even know the Christmas story. So at the first rehearsal the

let's read a bit see p 40

director decides to begin by reading to the children from the nativity story in the Bible. The narrator is a youngster - whose mother is the Christmas pageant director.

Mother read, "Joseph and Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child..."

P41-42

"Pregnant!" yelled Ralph Herdman.

Well, that stirred things up. All the big kids began to giggle and all the little kids wanted to know what was so funny; and Mother had to hammer on the floor with a blackboard pointer. "That's enough, Ralph," she said, and went on with the story.

"I don't think it's very nice to say Mary was pregnant," Alice whispered to me.

"But she was," I pointed out. In a way, though, I agreed with her. It sounded too ordinary. Anybody could be pregnant. "Great with child," sounded better for Mary.

"I'm not supposed to talk about people being pregnant." Alice folded her hands in her lap and

pinched her lips together. "I'd better tell my mother."

"Tell her what?"

"That your mother is talking about things like that in church. My mother might not want me to be here."

I was pretty sure she would do it. Her mother, Mrs. Wendleken, didn't even want cats to have kittens or birds to lay eggs, and she wouldn't let Alice play with anybody who had two rabbits. Mary was pregnant! Mary had a baby.

But there wasn't much I could do about it, except pinch Alice, which I did. She yelped, and Mother separated us and made me sit beside Imogene Herdman and sent Alice to sit in the middle of the baby angels." [Ibid., p. 41-42]

Mary was pregnant! Mary had a baby. Try as we might, we can't deny it, hide it - or even disguise it. She may be a stranger to us, but she was undeniably pregnant.

"Hail Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with

thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

Every Roman Catholic knows that prayer intimately. It is/has been prayed more frequently than any other prayer with the exception of the Lord's Prayer. It is not prayed by Protestants. As a matter of fact, other than playing a supporting role in our nativity tableaux and Sunday School pageants, Mary is virtually ignored in Protestant piety, theology, worship, and sermons.

Protestants have two problems with the whole topic.

The first is that around this topic there are and have been significant differences between Protestantism and Catholicism. At the time of the Reformation, Luther and his followers swept away centuries of accumulated tradition about the veneration of the Saints. Mary was a casualty of that process. Luther himself said some nice things

It is used as cliche - desperation pass at end of game is "Hail Mary pass"

dramatic moments in movies.

rosary bead - Hail Mary's + Our Fathers

Protestants are not about Paul the theologian - Pet. simulat although Rome has appropriated his + thunderously silent about M.

Insert on Prot. Reformation + M. devotion unofficial Prot. ignored it the best ground
1. Prot. emph on Bible - M. not mom, no Imm. Con. + Ass.
2. Baroque Monast. + Celibacy
3. decapitated Feminine church

RC + Prot know about excesses - (it wasn't them + us - all us) vs Saint veneration - sacred relics - Cathedrals would keep, show on special days. Bishops + Priests collected (Luther's friend Frederick) dead travelings shrines - visit of Mary's milk - wood from cross - bones - Mary relics were special visit of her milk - stood of hair

So was any sense of saints for Prot for bad - arose typical Protestant view of saints

about her, but in liturgy and Protestant practice and theology, she virtually disappeared. And, as happens frequently in history, action stimulates reaction: the more vigorously Protestants dissented about the topic, the more vigorously the Roman church advocated it.

Now, if you are a visiting Roman Catholic, excuse us while we catch up on a topic which is familiar to you... In the middle of the 19th Century the church declared the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, that Mary, like Jesus, had ~~become~~ been conceived immaculately, without sin. A century later, 1950, Pope Pius XII proclaimed, with full Papal infallibility, the Bodily Assumption of Mary into heaven. In Protestantism, the criterion for the truth of a doctrine is the Bible. That's what makes us Protestant, in a sense. Roman Catholicism uses as a criteria for truth, Scripture but also the church - its traditions, councils and now, the Pope when he speaks "ex-cathedra." We play by different rules here.

Rosary - veneration prayers to -

The point is that Catholics have seemed most Catholic around the topic of Mary. And so - we have become most Protestant by ignoring her, which is too bad.

The second problem comes from within our own family. The Virgin Birth itself has become a litmus test of orthodoxy for many Protestants. In the early part of this century, in reaction to what seemed like a wave of easy liberalism, a series of books appeared which set out to define the "Fundamentals of the Christian Faith." Among those "fundamentals" were the "Innerancy of Scripture, and the Virgin Birth." The term "Fundamentalist" was first used to describe the partisans of this approach. One of the unfortunate products was that Mary's virginity became far more important than it is in the Bible. It became a test case. If you believed it - you were a Christian. If you had trouble with it - you were not.

The Bible is less than definitive on the topic. The Old Testament passage in Isaiah 7 which

is cited as a prophetic proof text is unclear. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son." The original Hebrew read "a young woman shall conceive.") Somehow, when Hebrew got translated into Greek, "young woman" became "virgin."

In the New Testament, not much is made of the topic. Mark and John do not mention it. It appears that Paul never heard of it. At least, the New Testament does not hold it up as a test of faith.

What gets lost in all of that is the power Mary had maintained across the centuries. She has inspired some of the most sublime art in all of history. It is impossible not to contemplate the Pieta, a replica which stands in St. Patrick's in New York, without being deeply and profoundly moved. Shrines to the Blessed Virgin continue to be very popular. Furthermore, the piety is often politically revolutionary. Our Lady of Guadalupe is a partisan of the poor and oppressed. And Polish officials know that the annual pilgrimage to

RM Brown
Latin America
a pleasant virgin
not Queen of Heaven

the Shrine of the Black Madonna is overtly nationalistic and patriotic and therefore potentially violent: Polish officials watch it very carefully.

On the other hand, psychologists have pointed out that all of the church doctrine about Mary came from the hearts and minds of celibate men who, at least in the Middle Ages, were committed to the notion that sex was evil. In a particularly good book, from a feminist perspective, Alone Of All Her Sex, the author, Maria Warner, observes that "men who denied themselves women needed a woman on whom to pour out love, while women, suffering beneath a social system which denigrated womanhood, needed a woman's compassion to ease their pain."

Rose. Rad. Reuther
For 12 cent. theol. + clergy who were celibate - refused to express sexuality -
so - a beautiful virgin to worship became a safe fantasy..

"Hail Mary" - today? Presbyterian Robert MaAfee Brown suggests that Catholics and Protestants - particularly Protestants, ought to recover something of the Mary of the Bible. We may not want to call her Queen of Heaven, or Mother of God, but she was, after all, the Mother of Jesus.

Use Reuther materials here
let's go way back - pre-Biblical times -
see notes

If his friends & enemies are worthy our attention, certainly his mother is -

Regardless of whatever else you believe about her, or cannot believe about her, she carried him in her body. She gave him life. She fed, bathed, nurtured, sang to, laughed with - Jesus. "O thou who held the world in thy embrace, I dandled thee," Madeleine L'Engle has Mary say... She deserves our attention. She is our link with something very important in the whole story. Without Mary, our faith is inclined to become too ethereal, too philosophic, too unearthly. (Mary, Ralph Herdman reminds us, was pregnant!) She is a link between this story and our humanity.

When we pursue the Mary of the Bible, what we find is the first disciple. Think of it... A teen-ager, probably early teens, engaged to a carpenter, suddenly and mysteriously pregnant, bearing that shame, somehow managing to keep the obligation to Joseph; delivering her child in the middle of an arduous journey, in a barn, dark, smelly, cold. Think of her faith through all of that, the faith of a child... Frederick Buechner

has a wonderful picture...

"She struck the angel Gabriel as hardly old enough to have a child at all, let alone this child, but he'd been entrusted with a message to give her, and he gave it.

"He told her what the child was to be named, and who he was to be, and something about the mystery that was to come upon her. 'You mustn't be afraid, Mary,' he said.

"As he said it, he only hoped she wouldn't notice that beneath the great, golden wings he himself was trembling with fear to think that the whole future of creation hung now on the answer of a girl." (Luke 1:26-35) [Frederick Buechner, Peculiar Treasures. A Biblical Who's Who, p. 39]

Think of her later: Joseph is dead, and her strong carpenter son who was her support, walks away from that Nazareth home to do what? to preach and teach and heal throughout Galilee. She never understood that very well. She keeps appearing on the edges of the story, gently trying

at Cana

to remind him of something, perhaps simply to tell him that she is there, that she will always be there for him, and that there will always be a home for him in Nazareth if he ever comes to his senses. Think of her, following her son for three years. Think of her, this mother - now perhaps in her middle or late 40's - at the cross, as her son dies, humiliated, abandoned by all, alone, life ebbing out of him... She is there with him, and for him... How much poorer our faith is without those images. Protestant thinking does not include pleading with Mary to "pray for us at the hour of our death" as the Hail Mary prayer requires. But that is a very powerful image and it is a very suggestive idea of a divine love which is real - particularly in the hour of our death.

read M.E. poem pg

I will never forget the day in July of 1944 when we learned that my uncle Jack had been killed in Saipan. I was only six. My grandmother was inconsolable. I had never witnessed grief like that. It upset me and I asked my mother about it.

I still remember her telling me, "It's the worst thing that can happen. It's worse than dying - to have one of your children die."

Hail Mary. Blessed art thou among women.

And the Mary of the Bible is a dreamer, a visionary, a revolutionary. When she and Elizabeth get together they talk about the meaning of their pregnancies and Mary connects the coming of the Messiah, her baby, with a new world, a new order of things. She is the first Christian activist. Her Magnificat is a revolutionary song about a new kind of society. It is more comfortable in Latin, obviously, because Mary sings about the powerful being scattered and the poor elevated, the hungry fed and the rich sent away empty. "What Mary does," Robert McAfee Brown points out, "is put the mandate for radical change centrally within the Christian story." [Christian Century, 6/3-10/87]

And so, if Christian social activism makes you nervous, and if you find yourself thinking that

the Gospel is not related to issues of justice and peace and hunger... If you don't want to have connections made between your assertion that God's Kingdom is now in our midst and the fact that there are homeless and hungry people walking the streets of this city in greater numbers than ever - you are going to have to make your case with Jesus' mother, who believes her son has to do precisely with a new order, a new world in which the poor and the rich will receive justice.

When we recover the Mary of the Bible we find the first Christian disciple and the first social activist. We also gain a theological insight, which I believe is at the critical heart of the matter. When we recover Mary we gain the awareness that Jesus was born - just as you and I were born, just as babies are being born this very minute at Cook County Hospital, in ghettoes, villages, clinics, huts all over the world. It was the same for him; and that undramatic insight, I submit, is one of the most important and one of the most

gloriously good pieces of news there is.

We are inclined to disembody Christ and separate him from our own humanness. We are inclined to believe that the physical world is not a good place to be, that this tangible, sensual world is a tempting and suspicious and dubious place, and that our calling is to keep it at arm's length. Left to our own theological devices, we are very much tempted to conjure up a Christ who descended full-grown from heaven in an ethereal white robe, who levitated over the dusty roads of Palestine in order not to get his feet dirty, and . . . who was as an Eastern holy man, blissfully innocent of the flesh and the body.

Mary is the corrective. She was pregnant. Jesus was born.

That's what the Apostles' Creed intends to celebrate in the phrase, "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." What the early church was celebrating was the fact that he was conceived; and that he was born - like everyone

else. The theological and emotional accent is on the word - "conceived," and the word "born." That's the miracle.

Our Jewish forbears knew that life is God's gift; that God's breath - and God's spirit are what animates us. That is the beauty of the Genesis creation story. They knew what caused conception. They didn't understand why some occasions of sexual intimacy resulted in pregnancy and some did not. But they knew that when life occurred there was a sense in which it is always "conceived by the Holy Ghost."

A lovely ancient Jewish saying expressed it:

"There are three partners in the production of any human being - the Holy One, blessed be He, the father and the mother."

The miracle occurs every time life begins. That is the miracle we celebrate. God chooses human life. God chooses that most human, worldly and earthy function - human birth - as the way to send a son among us.

The fundamental miracle is not a Virgin Birth. Madeleine L'Engle suggests; "far more mind-boggling (is) the Power of All Creation stooping so low as to become one us us." [A Stone for a Pillow, p. 107,108]

Mary is the one person in this drama of Christian faith who reminds us that the world is our home. When we start believing that religion ought to be delivering us from this world, Mary reminds us that she bore God's son in her womb and gave him birth.

Mary is a reminder that the creation is good: that God is still creating, that every human birth is a conception by God's spirit and therefore full of enormous promise and potential.

Mary is a reminder that the Savior of the world was a child once and lived in a family, and in that family learned about his own humanity.

Mary is a reminder that our faith is in Jesus, who once laughed around a family dinner table and played with friends and learned to love

the world by living in it, and on occasion being overwhelmed by it - just as it is for you and me.

Mary is a reminder that our Lord learned about enormous potential and the wonderful healing power of human love, and how it overcomes the fears and anxieties of childhood and adolescence - in relationship with his own mother.

Mary - bore him, loved him, nurtured him, corrected him, laughed with him.

Mary stayed with him and somehow watched him die and in a very real way gave him to you and me.

My deeply ingrained Protestantism won't quite allow me to ask her to pray for me at the hour of death, but I know what it means - and I am grateful for the reminder of the profound love of God to which it bears eloquent witness.

And I have no qualms about affirming her and thanking her for her son and I invite you to salute her...

Hail Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with thee surely. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Amen.

LADIES THEOLOGY

OF PARK RIDGE

7417 W. Howard St.
Chicago, Il. 60648
April 23, 1988

Rev. John Buchanan
Fourth Presbyterian Church
126 E. Chestnut
Chicago, Il. 60611

Dear Rev. Buchanan:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our Fall 1988 series. We are confirming the date of Wednesday, November 30 for you presentation as per your conversation with Linda Korn.

We meet at St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Prospect and Cedar Streets in Park Ridge, beginning at 9:15 a.m. and ending about 11:30 a.m. Our usual format is a 45-50 minute presentation from the speaker followed by a 15-20 minute discussion and concluding with a question and answer session with the group-at-large. Any suggestion for our table discusssion in the form of a question or a statement from you will prove helpful that day. If you prefer a change in this suggested format, please let me know.

Enclosed is a list of the names and dates of the speakers for the entire series, directions to St. Luke's Church and a history of our group. There will be a "reserved" parking place for you in front of the Church. May we kindly request that you send us the exact title of your talk, a brief description of the talk and a curriculum vitae by May 15th. Our group does not meet during the summer and we need these items now to complete our publicity for the series. A return envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Our usual honorarium of $125 is granted to our speakers for each talk and we trust that it will be satisfactory. We thank you for sharing in our program and look forward to hearing you in November.

Sincerely,

Carol von Wahlde

Carol von Wahlde
Coordinator

Phone: 763-4611

All the flowers of all the tomorrows are in the seeds of today

LADIES THEOLOGY

OF PARK RIDGE

1988 Fall Series
"Strengthening Our Gift of Faith"

September 14, 1988
Ms. Suzy Yehl
Subject: Rainbows for All God's Children--children of divorce

September 28, 1988
Bishop William McManus
Subject: Stewardship

October 12, 1988
Ms. Edwina Gately
Subject: Rediscovering and Reclaiming the Feminine Soul

October 26, 1988
Rev. James Halstead O.S.A.
Subject: TBA

November 9, 1988
Rev. Robert Barron
Subject: Parables as subversive

November 30, 1988
Rev. John Buchanan
Subject: A Protestant view of Mary

LADIES THEOLOGY

OF PARK RIDGE

HISTORY

Ladies Theology of Park Ridge (LTPR) sponsors ecumenical, theology-based lecture/discussion series, with twelve sessions offered each year--six each spring and fall. Since its inception in 1966, LTPR has remained true to the goals of its founder, Mary Jule Durkin, who wanted to share the content of her graduate-level theology studies with other women in her Park Ridge parish, Mary, Seat of Wisdom. Speakers with expertise in the study of religious faith, practice and experience were invited to address women from the parish community who would meet in a convenient location on a regular basis. To encourage young mothers to attend, baby-sitting service was provided.

The format followed today is an outgrowth of the original plan and includes a speaker presentation approximately one hour in length, 20-30 minutes of small group table discussion, with a speaker-participants question and answer wrap-up. Attendance has grown from an original group of 30 to 100-150 women and men representative of the various church groups in Park Ridge and surrounding communities.

A Steering Committee of approximately 20 women with diverse religious backgrounds organizes the series, engages speakers, suggests topics, and conducts the meetings. Attendees pay a modest registration fee to cover meeting costs and speaker honorariums. Members of the Steering Committee serve as discussion leaders for assigned table groups.

Nine women's theology groups now function in the Chicagoland area. All joined with LTPR in celebrating the latter's 15th anniversary in September, 1981. Five hundred participants gathered for the joint "Day of Christian Renewal."

Rev. John Cusick, LTPR advisor since 1974, explains the spirit and purpose of the durable movement: "It is a constant source of idea exchange--a forum where theology and all types of presentations on human experience and daily living are given flesh. It works for its speakers who see people excited about their faith and wanting to know more and be more. It works for its participants. They listen. They speak. They absorb. They give it away. The women of Ladies Theology are alive with the faith, and giving it away to others makes God win out again."

DIRECTIONS TO ST. LUKE's LUTHERAN CHURCH, Prospect and Cedar Streets, Park Ridge, Il.

VIA Kennedy Expressway - Take Kennedy North to Cumberland North Exit. Take Cumberland North to Touhy Avenue (7200 North - approximately 1½ miles) Turn right or East on Touhy - go under viaduct and up to six-corner intersection of Touhy, Prospect, and Northwest Hy. (Citizens Bank is on center point of intersection.) Turn left or North onto Prospect and continue one block to St. Lukes.

VIA Touhy Avenue - Take Touhy Avenue all the way West to downtown Park Ridge
Bank in middle) Turn right
ue one block to Cedar.
nt intersection is Touhy,

MEMORANDUM

Fourth Presbyterian Church

cit - go off ramp and
light (Golf). Turn left or
viaduct about 1 block to
miles south to Northwest Hy.
ce about 2 miles to center
ins Bank intersection make
one block North to Cedar.

Date _____

To _____

From _____

Re: _____

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s's is on corner.

St. Luke's Lutheran Park Ridge

Kennedy – off at
Cumberland –
North to Touhy (7200 N)
left (N) on Prospect -
2 blocks

Linda Korn